

159. Classical and mediaeval notions of labor. The Greeks and Romans regarded all labor for gain as degrading. The Greeks seem to have reached this opinion through a great esteem for intellectual pursuits, which they thought means of cultivation. The gainful occupations, or any occupations pursued for gain, were " banausic," which meant that they had an effect opposite to that of cultivation. The Romans seem to have adopted the Greek view, but they were prepared for it by militarism. The Middle Ages got the notion of labor from the Roman tradition. They mixed this with the biblical view. Labor was a necessity, as a consequence and penalty of sin, and directly connected, as a curse, with the " Fall." It was correlative to a curse on the ground, by which, also as a curse for sin, it was made hard to win subsistence by agriculture. The mediaeval philosophers, being clerics, held a life of contemplation to be far superior to one of labor or fighting. Labor was at best an evil necessity, a hardship, a symptom of the case of man, alienated from God and toiling to get back, if there was a way to get back, to the kingdom of God. The church offered a way to get back, namely, by sacraments, devotion, ritual, etc., that is, by a technically religious life, which could be lived successfully only if practiced exclusively. It occupied all the time of the " religious," technically so called. Labor was used for penance and for ascetic purposes. Often it was employed for useful results and with beneficial effect on useful arts. The purpose, however, was to ward off the vices of leisure. The ascetic temper and taste made labor sweet, so long as asceticism ruled the mores of the age.¹ Labor for economic production was not appreciated by

the church.
The production of wealth was not a religious purpose. It was even discouraged, since disapproval of wealth and luxury was one of the deep controlling principles of mediaeval Christianity.
The unreality of mediaeval world philosophy appeared most distinctly in the views of marriage and labor, the two chief interests of everyday life. Marriage was a concession, a compromise with human weakness. There was something better, viz. celibacy. Labor was a base necessity. Contemplation was better.

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, II, 2, qu. 82, I, 2; qu. 187, 3.